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## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

### GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

*The Mind of Primitive Man.* By FRANZ BOAS. [A course of lectures delivered before the Lowell Institute, Boston, Mass., and the National University of Mexico, 1910-1911.] (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1911. Pp. x, 294.)

PROFESSOR BOAS bespeaks, in his closing words, "a greater tolerance of forms of civilization different from our own", and hopes that he may have helped to form a "conviction, that, as all races have contributed in the past to cultural progress in one way or another, so they will be capable of advancing the interests of mankind, if we are only willing to give them a fair opportunity". As this paragraph closes a chapter which contains a strong advocacy of the negro in the United States, it might appear that the book under review is a sort of special plea for the "lower" races. But this is not so; it combats a number of current views, but it has no programme. It is a scientific work, replete with fact and reason.

Dr. Boas is like George Catlin and others who have known several primitive peoples from protracted residence among them, and who return to reprove the current sentiment of contempt or misprision with which the less advanced races are viewed. Catlin insisted that the bad Indians were those who were made so by the social environment forced upon them through the irruption of the whites. Similarly, Boas refers our attitude toward primitive peoples in general to an insufficient realization of the power of social environment—upon them and upon ourselves. How the mode of thought, with us as with them, depends upon traditional materials, he makes very clear by a series of examples, which recall in some degree the masses of instances in Sumner's *Folkways*.

One very important piece of argumentation is that by which the author seems to strike at the vitals of the method of Tylor and others, in that he assaults the validity of the ideas about *series* and *parallelism* in social evolution. He believes that the comparison of "types of culture represented by primitive people and those conditions which prevailed among the ancestors of the present civilized peoples, at the dawn of history", presents analogues, and that these latter are supported by the evidence from survivals, but that "the evidence of archaeology does not support the complete generalization". Ethnic phenomena, he says, are not always due to the same causes; and he illustrates at some length from archaeology; "the sameness of ethnic phenomena is more superficial than complete, more apparent than real".

Probably no one, once past the early days of not too intelligent discipleship, would be disposed to take much issue with what is said; and the author emerges from his discussion, in any case, with a novel formulation of his faith, and one worth thinking about. "We recognize", he writes, "a peculiar tendency of diverse customs and beliefs to converge toward similar forms". It is difficult to see why the existence of a peculiar tendency toward parallelism does not form a sufficient basis for about all one cares to do along the line of Tylor and the school represented by him. One might agree to all that Professor Boas has to say about our uncertainty as to exact origins, admit that we have paid too little attention to individual variations, and yet hold with Tylor to a belief in series and parallelism, phenomena due "to the unity of the human mind and the consequent similar response to outer and inner stimuli". It is impossible to go into an extended discussion of this matter here, and it is also unnecessary; for it appears that the author, though he lays more at the door of acculturation than some would, is effective in correcting and refining the idea of parallelism rather than in disposing of it.

No person interested in primitive life can afford to leave unread what is said, out of copious and well-digested experience, about the misinterpretations of the mental traits of primitive man. "I will say right here that the traveller or student measures the fickleness of the people by the importance which he attributes to the actions or purposes in which they do not persevere, and he weighs the impulse for outbursts of passion by his standard." That is, he is always reading into the savage mind what is in his own as a result of the life he has led in an environment which has set his values for him. The tendency of the author to get down to facts and to avoid metaphysical constructions is one which calls for praise and should evoke imitation.

It is hard to pass over many a page of admirable exposition—admirable, whether disputable or not—in this little book; but it is absolutely necessary to refer to the startling matter, original with the author, relative to the influence of environment upon a race character commonly assumed to be among the most stable—the cranial index. The shape of the skull turns out, according to the measurements given by Professor Boas, to be readily, though inexplicably, modifiable by transfer of a race from Europe to America. The normal index of East European Hebrews, for example, is about 83; but for the children born immediately after the immigration of their parents, it drops to about 82; and in the second generation reaches 79. The shape of the face suffers a concomitant change. "In other words, the effect of American environment makes itself felt immediately, and increases slowly with the increase of time elapsed between the immigration of the parents and the birth of the child."

It is to be hoped that these results will speedily be tested by other observers, for it is needless to say that the establishment of this plasticity

of form, apparently entirely unexpected by the investigator, means the general discrediting of craniology, so far, at least, as the cephalic index is concerned. Somatic anthropologists who make some specialty of craniometry cannot but have an absorbing interest in Professor Boas's results; for his high reputation insures the scrupulousness of his procedure.

*The Mind of Primitive Man* is a good book to read—clear and forceful, simple in language, attractive in style, and devoid of metaphysical wanderings.

ALBERT G. KELLER.

*Hellenistic Athens: an Historical Essay.* By WILLIAM SCOTT FERGUSON, Assistant Professor of History, Harvard College. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1911. Pp. xviii, 487.)

IN ten chapters Professor Ferguson "has aimed to trace the general movement of Athenian affairs from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. to the sack of Athens by Sulla in 86 B.C." Athens had the most "eventful and individual experience" of any of the small city-states which were gradually transformed, during this period of a little more than two centuries, "into municipalities of large territorial empires". Hence this special study of her history during the transformation. The historians of Hellenism—Thirlwall, Droysen, Holm, Niese, Beloch, Susemihl, Mahaffy, and others—have dealt with Athens only incidentally, from the standpoint of the great organizing powers of the period; or with special reference to particular phases of her development. A connected history of Athens during the Hellenistic period, treating with due perspective her political, social, economic, and intellectual life, has hitherto been lacking.

The book by which Professor Ferguson supplies this lack is the outcome of thirteen years' intensive study of the Hellenistic period, and of as many learned and able papers published during this time in various places (p. 470). These papers have given him high rank among scholars of America and Europe as chronologist and epigraphist, certainly the two most essential requisites in one who would reconstruct for himself, in order to portray to others, the career of Hellenistic Athens. For the literary tradition of the Hellenistic period is provokingly fragmentary, and it is only from its inscriptions "that we obtain our knowledge of the institutions of public and social life, of the families and persons influential at particular epochs, of the religious and economic currents—in fact, of the entire inner life of the people" (p. 468). From the standpoint of chronologists and epigraphists or students of papyri—and to the latter we now owe extensive fragments of five comedies of Menander which must hereafter serve as a basis for the proper treatment of historical material found in the New Comedy—Professor Ferguson's book will leave little if anything to be desired. Particularly in what we